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ABSTRACT

Recent studies have investigated the transition of relationships from a more intimate to a less intimate state--the depenetration process. Various phases of interpersonal conflict in the dissolution of marital dyads have been described, and factors indicating that a marriage might be "in trouble" have been identified. Processes that are explainable through social exchange theory can be shown to be operating in an individual's decision to terminate an interpersonal relationship. As couples move from developing to decaying relationships, their communication behavior changes in the following directions: broad to narrow, unique to stylized, efficient to difficult, flexible to rigid, smooth to awkward, personal to public, spontaneous to hesitant, and judgment-giving to judgment-suspending. Six major phases of the depenetration process are prenuptial misperception/postnuptial reality, differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and terminating. Five typical stages in emotional response patterns are denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The following behavioral extremes tend to precipitate relationship de-escalation: helpful/critical, active/passive, aggressive/evasive, dominating/submissive, and certain/provisional. If not resolved through shared communication, problems in an intimate relationship tend to accelerate and may eventually cause the demise of the relationship. (GT)

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THE TERMINATION PROCESS:

Communication Patterns in Decaying Relationships

A paper presented on November 24, 1978 at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English, Kansas City.

by

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One of the most crucial aspects in an adult individual's life space and personal growth concerns the degree to which his/her relationship with a significant intimate other (i.e., mate, date, best friend, etc.) is progressing in a healthy manner. Relationships have their ups and downs, and this is especially true for those relationships we value and treasure and which mean a great deal to us. Emphasis has been placed upon how individuals make connections with one another; that is, how they start to form a meaningful relationship. Recently, people have tried to look at how these connections are built upon and develop after initial interactions have taken place and how relationships start to come apart under the duress of stress and conflict. With the ever-increasing rise in the divorce rate, the degree of mobility that people possess in their lives, and the nature of powerful changes, "passages", which affect the adult individual, it becomes crucial to understand and identify the ways in which relationships start to "come apart at the seams" and how they may be "patched up" again.

I. Introduction: The Nature of the Depenetration Process

A. The depenetration process is concerned with a relationship in the process of transition from a more intimate state to a less intimate state. The purpose of this paper is to discern certain phases of interpersonal conflict that may lead participants in marital dyads in the direction of disintegration and relational death. I am more interested in diagnosing "diseased states" (Bradford, 1977) that may occur in otherwise healthy marital dyads. Discerned stages of conflict develop subtly and over periods of time. As Kessler (1975) has explained, the emotional relationship between two people usually dies by the inches. This paper hopes to provide answers to some of the following questions:

1. Are there systematic patterns of communication that characterize the deterioration of a relationship?
2. Can we identify communication strategies that repel us at various stages of a relationship?

3. What are the differences between marriages that are able to cope with conflict and those which aren't capable? That is, what are the communicative behaviors in so-called "happy" marriages and what are they in "dull durable" marriages? (Bradford, 1977)

B. Many scholarly articles and books have been written about communication behavior in marital relationships. Few authors have specifically identified phases of interpersonal conflict in the dissolution of marital dyads, although some of them have approached the subject in useful ways.

1. Bochannon (1970) argued that the "first visible stage of a deteriorating marriage is likely to be what psychiatrists call emotional divorce. With emotional divorce people do not grow together so much as they grow apart." His claim is significant and is a contributing factor to the death of a dyad.

2. The termination of "intimate relations" was the subject of Davis' (1973) book where he described relationships as either "passing away" or dying a "sudden death". The first term is used to refer to a relationship which may slowly lose the vitality, and three reasons seem to be especially crucial here:

(A) A new intimate may enter the relationship scene;

(B) Interaction distance (availability for interaction) may expand and, over time, will cause a relationship to fade;

(C) The normal processes of individual psychological and physical development over the course of the relationship may sap strength from it. People grow at different rates and in different directions.

If the preceeding factors are analagous to a relationship slowly bleeding to death, the concept of "sudden death" is like an unexpected decapitation (Knapp, 1978). The actual death of one partner would be an example of a relationship suddenly dissolving but there are several other instances in which relationship may experience sudden death:

(A) In some instances, the partners have lost feelings of intimacy but continue to act out their roles because certain ties make it difficult to sever the relationship. Once these ties are loosened, decay processes occur fairly quickly.

(B) Sometimes one person wants to terminate the relationship

and the other does not. If the unwilling partner is skillful enough, he/she may keep the relationship in a state of limbo indefinitely. However, the other partner may act swiftly to avoid any prolongation attempts by the other;

(C) Another instance of sudden death occurs when neither party wants to end the relationship, but due to unforseen events, a quick termination is precipitated. (Knapp, 1977)

Davis' use of the death metaphor is intriguing and is relevant to the theme of this discussion. It provides us with a means of conceptualizing the nature of the depenetration process and the events that may cause this movement to a less intimate state.

C. The Causes of Termination: Some Relevant Factors. Bradford (1977) conducted a survey in which marital partners were asked to give their first indication they could recall that indicated to them that their marriage might be "in trouble". Table I lists these factors in the order of frequency reported by the participants:

TABLE I: TERMINATION FACTORS

Problem Area	% of Sample
1. Communication	75
2. Sexual Dysfunction	75
3. Money Problems	70
4. Expectancy/Reality Discrepancy	65
5. Work Situation	60
6. Incompatibility	60
7. Extramarital Affairs	55
8. Growth Patterns	50
9. Dominance/Submission	30

These factors indicate that relationships which are "in trouble" may show some specific signs of stress and conflict in particular areas of the couple's relationship. These factors will be discussed in more depth in the following sections concerned with the stages of deterioration of an intimate interpersonal relationship.

D. The depenetration process is something that is seen to occur over a fairly long period of time, for the most part. It is something that develops within the relationship and takes time to express and confront. The following discussions will seek to: (1) clarify the cognitive elements in decision-making within the termination process; (2) discuss the various stages that occur within the process and the communication behaviors

that characterize each stage; and (3) provide an understanding of the emotional impact that the process has upon the participants. Finally, this discussion will point out some of the common pitfalls which lead to the termination of interpersonal relationships.

II. The Depenetration Process: Toward a Prospective Cognitive Theory

A. Perhaps one of the most useful theories for explaining the course of deterioration of an interpersonal relationship is social exchange theory. Simply put, social exchange theory deals with the idea that people generally try to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. In this regard, certain behaviors produce rewards whereas other behaviors prove too costly to maintain. This discussion of rewards and costs can be seen to have important impacts upon the rate and level of the social depenetration process.

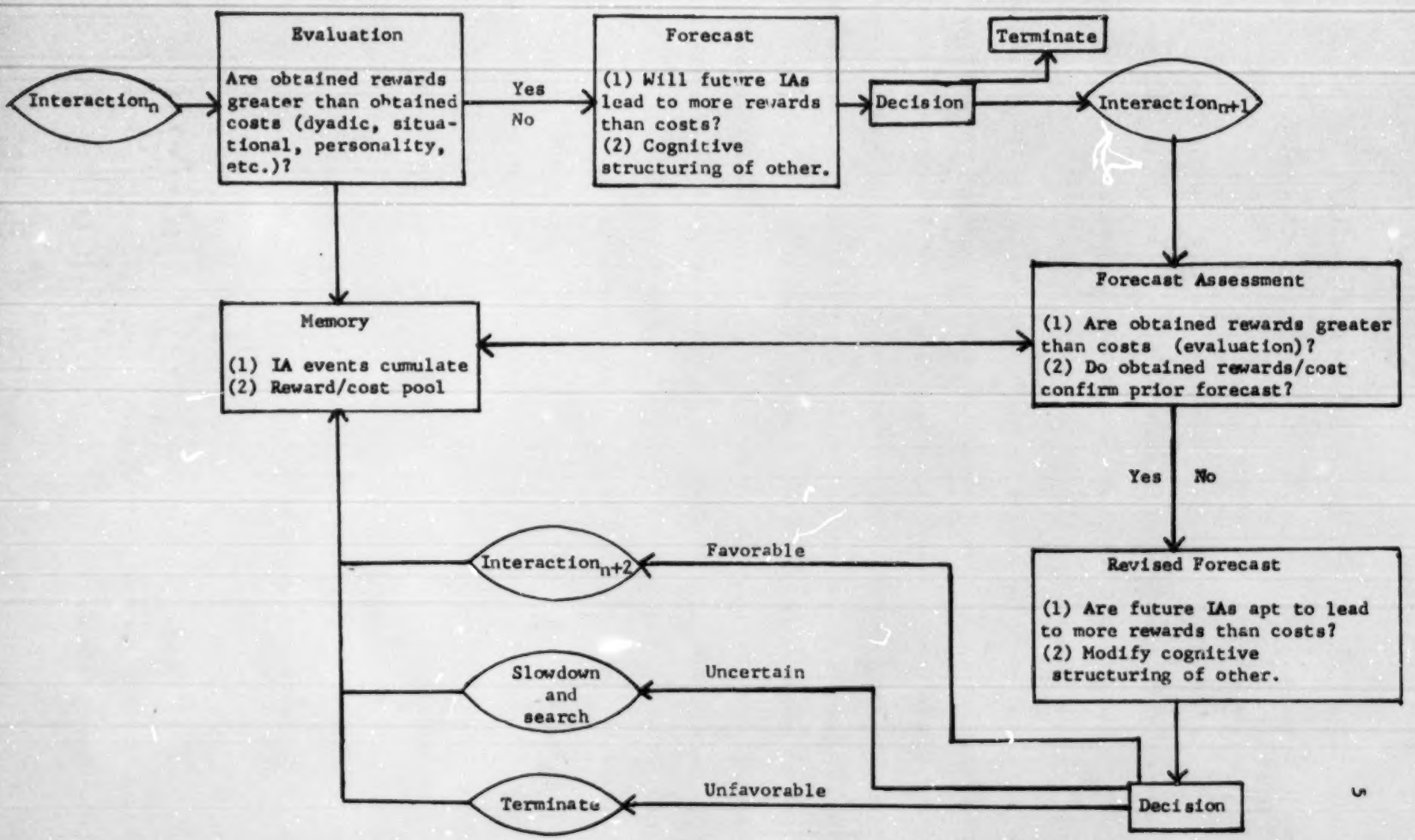
B. Figure 1 (Altman and Taylor, 1973) analyzes the covert psychological processes that take place following a particular interaction with another individual. These processes can be shown to be operating in an individual's decision to terminate, or make less intimate, an interpersonal relationship. The following things are hypothesized to occur:

1. Following a given interaction, a person makes an evaluation of the preceeding interaction with regard to the "profit" inherent in the nature of the present relationship with that other individual. The key question here concerns the extent to which the obtained rewards are greater than the obtained costs.

2. Following this evaluation process, individual's forecast the type of interactions that will occur with this person in the future. This involves two things: (A) an analysis of whether future interactions will lead to more rewards than costs, and (B) a cognitive structuring of the other. This last point concerns forming a picture, or an image, of the other person. Thus, after a particularly costly interaction, we may come to see our marital partner as less desireable, less worth the effort, etc. than before that interaction.

3. Following the evaluation and forecast processes, a decision is made as

Figure 1: Interpersonal reward / cost aspects of social penetration process



Source: Altman, I., and Taylor, D. Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships New York; Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1973, p. 35

to whether to continue the relationship or whether to terminate it, or make less intimate. In intimate and involved relationships, the termination is a slow process and involves the following characteristics:

4. Individuals interact again in another interaction and following this, they assess the prior forecast in terms of whether the rewards are still greater than the costs incurred in the relationship and whether the obtained rewards and costs confirm the prior forecast.

5. Based on the answers to the above questions, individuals revise their forecasts in terms of questioning whether future interactions will lead to more rewards than costs and in terms of modifying their congitive structure of the other.

6. Based on the forecast assessment and the revised forecast processes, individuals decide upon the nature of their relationship with the other person and the behaviors which will characterize that relationship.

Figure 1 also indicates the flow of the evaluation and the forecast judgements into a central memory. This construct represents a useful way of discussing the cumulative reservoir of prior reward/cost experiences. Thus individuals are able to compare interactions across time and across people and make appropriate decisions for future interactions.

Now that we have an idea of a general motivating force - the examination of rewards and costs - which determine movement through the termination process, let's examine this model from another perspective, the directions that are available for movement, or the stages involved in the depenetration process. But before this is possible, we will examine the nature of communication behaviors which characterize and lead into the stages of the depenetration process.

III. Stages of Decay: Communication Behaviors in the Termination Process

A. It is difficult, if not impossible, to think of any message sent by one person to another that does not, in some way, also carry a commentary on the relationship that exists between the two people. In a real sense, each message carries information at two

levels. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) call these the content level and the relationship level. As Knapp (1978) states, "In short, the relationship message tells us how to interpret the content" (p.5). The central question thus becomes, "How do people talk to each other when tearing down a relationship?"

B. Table II provides some general dimensions of communication behavior in developing and decaying relationships (Knapp, 1978). These factors are also explained below:

TABLE II

Some General Dimensions of Communication Behavior in Developing and Decaying Relationships

Growth Stages ⟶

⟵ Decay Stages

	Narrow	Broad
	Stylized	Unique
	Difficult	Efficient
	Rigid	Flexible
	Awkward	Smooth
	Public	Personal
	Hesitant	Spontaneous
Judgement	Suspended	Judgement Given

Source: Knapp, Mark. Social Intercourse: From Greeting to Goodbye. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978, p.14.

1. Narrow-Broad: "When relationships begin to come apart it is not unusual to note the need to circumscribe the breadth of communication topics and responses - 'I just don't want to talk about that'" (Knapp, 1978, p.15) While a relationship is in a state of decaying, marital partners do not feel a need to broaden the scope of their interactions.

2. Stylized-Unique: "Uniqueness in communication simply suggests the adoption of a more idiosyncratic communication system adapted to the peculiar nature of the interacting parties" (Knapp, 1978, p.15). The formalities of stylized communication return in the deterioration process, as if to say: "'I am no longer going to acknowledge the peculiar nature of our relationship and will treat you more like I

would a large number of people'" (Knapp, 1978, p.15).

3. Difficult-Efficient: Since there is a lack of energy being put into the interactions between partners in the decay process, communication tends to be seen as difficult and less efficient than before. The overriding message here is "It's just too hard to talk to you, you don't understand anything I have to say."

4. Rigid-Flexible: "Flexibility simply refers to the number of different ways any given idea or feeling can be expressed" (Knapp, 1978, p.16). The greater the degree of growth in an interpersonal relationship, the greater the degree of flexibility of communication is displayed. In both the early stages of growth (initial interactions) and the later stages of decay, people's communication attempts involve fewer channels and more standardization than flexibility.

5. Awkward-Smooth: Decay processes are characterized by a state of awkwardness and confusion. Partners see attempts at interaction and communication to be awkward in the broadest sense of the term, suggesting ungracefulness, unmanageableness, inconvienence, tactlessness, embarrassment, clumsy, etc.

6. Public-Personal: This dimension refers to the depth of the social penetration process. Initially, our public personality is revealed and only later does the more personal side of us emerge. Decay processes focus on attempts to shut off the valves that may release personal communication, and thus less and less intimate, personal information is exchanged between partners.

7. Hesitant-Spontaneous: There is an increased hesitancy on the part of marital partners to share intimate feelings and thoughts in the decay process. Partners feel unsure and pause in acting, choosing, or decision-making, and thus less spontaneity, the ability to act without prompting or premeditation, is shown. Partners sometimes begin to practise what they will communicate to the other to avoid some of the problems mentioned above.

8. Judgement Suspended-Judgement Given: This refers to the degree of feedback which characterizes an interpersonal relationship. In a healthy, growing relationship,

members exchange both positive and negative feedback. As a relationship begins to decay, the members will move toward the suspension of overt evaluation. Interactions such as "Just tell me what I'm doing wrong and I will change" followed by such responses as "I'd rather not talk about it" (Knapp, 1978) become commonplace and attest to the lack of feedback displayed.

C. Communicating During Relationship Decay: The Return of the Stranger. The eight general characteristics of communication outlined above would most likely be found in the early stages of communication with an unknown person - a stranger. "As relationships decay, partners to the relationship seem to design messages in such a way that interaction patterns gradually take on the same 'stranger' characteristics - messages which are narrow, stylized, difficult, rigid, awkward, public, hesitant, and which suspend judgements" (Knapp, 1978, p.189). People seem to communicate the de-escalation of an interpersonal relationship by producing messages which communicate: "(1) an increasing physical and psychological distance; and (2) an increasing disassociation with the other person" (Knapp, 1978, p.189). In essence then, communication during the decay of an interpersonal relationship reverts back to that which people use with strangers.

D. The Stages of Decay. Based on the above information, the death of an interpersonal dyad can be characterized by six major phases or cycles: (1) Prenuptial misperception/Postnuptial reality; (2) Differentiating; (3) Circumscribing; (4) Stagnating; (5) Avoiding; and (6) Termination. Table III (Knapp, 1978) provides an overview of the types of dialogues which may characterize each of these stages. These stages will be discussed in more detail below:

TABLE III: An Overview of Termination Stages

Process	Stage	Representative Dialogue
Coming Apart	Prenuptial Misperception/ Postnuptial Reality	(1) "This isn't the way I expected things to be at all." (2) "How come you weren't like this before we got married?"
	Differentiating	"I just don't like big social events" "Sometimes I don't understand you. This is one area where I'm certainly not like you."
	Circumscribing	"Did you have a good time on your trip?" "What time will dinner be ready?"
	Stagnating	"What's there to talk about?" "Right. I know what you're going to say and you know what I'm going to say."
	Avoiding	(1)"I'm so busy. I just don't know when I'll be able to see you." (2)"If I'm not around when you try, you'll understand ..."
	Terminating	"I'm leaving you ... an don't bother trying to contact me." "Don't worry."

Source: Knapp, Mark. Social Intercourse: From Greeting to Goodbye. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978, p. 13

1. Prenuptial Misperception/Postnuptial Reality: The prenuptial misperception/ postnuptial reality phase appears to exist early in the relationship and to continue for an undetermined period of time. This phase is characterized by a misperception of what marriage will be like, followed by a gradual awareness of the realities expected in married life. As Bradford (1977) states, "The greatest single problem for the couple about to be married and for newlyweds is the discrepancy between their expectations and reality" (p.8). Kassler (1975) has expressed the problem clearly: "That person who was to fulfill almost all of your expectations, needs, and ideals turned out to be depressed, sloppy, a compulsive eater, uninformed, unaffectionate, asocial, domineering, insensitive, uncaring, a flirt, nagging, overly dependent, overly self-

sufficient, oversexed, or any other characteristic that isn't compatible with your needs. The honeymoon is over". The key aspect of this phase is the impact that the reality of married life has on couples. They seem to be faced with, and must solve, key problems in every facet of their lives. Of the major problems mentioned previously by Bradford (1977) partners identified the "expectancy/reality discrepancy" as most important. Others from the list relevant to the prenuptial misperception/postnuptial reality phase are "communication", "sexual dysfunction", and "incompatibility".

2. Differentiating: To differentiate means to become distinct or different in character. This phase is essentially a process of disengaging or uncoupling. As Knapp (1978) states, "While individual differences are of some concern at any stage of a developing relationship, they are now the major focus and serve as a prelude to increased interpersonal distance. A great deal of time and energy are spent talking and thinking about 'how different we really are'" (p.23). What was formerly seen as joint endeavors of a "we" nature now assume a more "I" or "my" orientation. Communication is thus characterized by what distinguishes the two persons or how little they actually have in common. The most visible form of differentiating, or affirming individuality, is fighting or conflict. The major problems here have to do with "incompatibility", "expectancy/reality discrepancy", and "growth patterns".

3. Circumscribing: This phase has to do with restricting the flow of communication between the marital partners. In decaying relationships, information exchange decreases both qualitatively and quantitatively. As Knapp (1978) states, "The main message strategy is to carefully control the areas of discussion, restricting communication to safe areas" (p.24). When communication does take place, superficiality and public aspects are increasingly the norm; "hence we see a lot less information exchanges about 'who I am' and 'what our relationship is like'" (Knapp, 1978, p.24).

4. Stagnating: To stagnate is to remain motionless or inactive. This phase is characterized by boredom and the absence of the investment of time and energy into the relationship and making it work. Partners seem to feel that since they "know"

how the interactions will go, it is not necessary to say anything. Life is thus seen as a rut in this stage and the couple are just "marking time" in a sense. The main theme characterizing this stage is, "There is little sense in bringing anything up since I already know what will happen, and it won't be nice". There appears to be a movement toward self-directed rather than other-directed growth patterns. Fifty percent of the people interviewed by Bradford (1977) indicated that they felt the disintegration of their marital relationship involved one or both of them "growing away from" the other. A marriage in which neither party is willing to invest interpersonal energy can be expected to atrophy. The marital partners become creatures of habit. One of the nine problem areas that frequently surfaced during this phase is "expectancy/reality discrepancy". The husband and wife are constant reminders to each other of the extent to which their mutual expectations of marriage have fallen short. This gives rise to another problem, "communication". A third contributing problem area is "incompatibility". They come to see one another as "different persons" than the man or woman they married.

5. Avoiding: While stagnating, the partners are usually in the same physical environment. Avoiding is an attempt to eliminate that condition. Here communication is designed to avoid face-to-face interaction (Knapp, 1978). The overriding message is "I am not interested in seeing you". In their avoidance of external conflict they create internalized conflict by making emotional deposits in what Bradford (1977) usefully calls a "Bitching Savings Account". Members obviously have repressed hurt feelings and hostilities as the relationship has begun to decay. Bradford (1977) states that:

> The BSA is analogous to a regular monetary savings account where funds are deposited over periods of time and left to accumulate at interest for future withdrawal. Feelings and irritants constitute the "funds" deposited in the BSA, and the future withdrawal, unfortunately, will be at the expense of one or both marital partners. Little irritants accumulate at compound interest until they can no longer be tolerated. They then become weapons used to wound the dyadic partner and contribute further to the deterioration of the relationship (p.12).

The biggest problem here was identified as "communication" problems. Silence becomes the main theme for the relationship. As Bohannon (1970) summarized this phase: "The path of every marriage is strewn with yesterday's unresolved conflicts." Three problem areas are relevant to this phase: "communication", "incompatibility", and "dominance/ submissive behavior."

6. Terminating: Termination dialogue is characterized by messages of distance and disassociation. Distance refers to an attempt to put psychological and physical barriers between the two communicators. Disassociation is found in messages that prepare the partners for their continued life without the other (Knapp, 1978). Communication behavior will thus be seen to polarize more than ever toward narrow, stylized, difficult, rigid, awkward, public, hesitant, and suspended judgements.

IV. Stages of Decay: The Emotional Response

A. We have looked at the breaking off of an intimate relationship from a descriptive and a cognitive perspective in order to understand what occurs in the process. In addition to the cognitive elements that have been identified, there are certain emotional responses that occur as individuals attempt to cope with changes in the nature of their intimate relationships. These emotional responses would also seem to coincide with the notion of stages of decay processes; that is, certain emotional responses preceede other emotional responses, each linked to the last one.

B. In her work with dying patients, Kubler-Ross (1969) identified five stages which she found to be generally typical of the responses of a person who was informed of a terminal condition. In many respects, the nature of terminating an intimate relationship is concerned with cutting the ties that bind people together, and in this sense, it represents an attempt to cope with a "terminal condition". The following five responses are characteristic of a person in such a position as this:

1. Denial and Isolation: This is the feeling that "there must be some mistake - it can't be happening to me". It is a time filled with defensiveness and feelings of loneliness. The person is just beginning to come to terms with breaking

off the relationship and is feeling the pain that starts to hit home during the period.

2. Anger: How one's feelings run to indignation and bitterness. People start to take out their frustrations on the people around them, including their best friends and co-workers. Anger starts to be openly displayed to the other person in the relationship with the hope that things can still be worked out from here.

3. Bargaining: This step reflects a pleading to keep the relationship going. Dyadic members attempt to work out a compromise, i.e., "If you give me one more chance, I will never do _____ that again." (Knapp, 1978) After denying the coming break-off and then reacting from an angry place, the person attempts to once again rationalize the situation and attempts to set up some type of stable structure that can keep the relationship going.

4. Depression: Depression may set in as one reacts to the physical, psychological, and social implications of the termination of the intimate relationship. This is an intense period of time in which the individual(s) is so caught up in the feelings involved in the termination of the relationship that he/she is only able to focus on the negative aspects of the experience.

5. Acceptance: Finally the individual comes to accept the nature of the situation and attempts to "make the best of it." This involves clarifying the nature of the present relationship with the other person as well as initial thoughts as to the nature of his future interactions with others. This may be a time when the individual "takes stock" of him/herself for analyzing the nature of his/her future interactions.

V. Potentially Destructive Patterns of Communication: An Interpersonal Chamber of Horrors

A. This section will be devoted to the explication of the specific ways people communicate with one another that tend to precipitate relationship de-escalation. It is obvious that some communication patterns elicit reactions such as fear, distrust, hurt, confusion, etc. which most experts feel are unproductive for relationship growth. These patterns are unproductive and problematic because they represent extremes. By

understanding these extreme problems we may begin to catch ourselves in the very act of initiating them:

1. Helpful-Critical Patterns: Sometimes, one trys to "save" or "protect" another person by being helpful. A popular and infuriating mechanism for doing this is "mindreading", which is an attempt by one person to predict and state to another person what that other person is feeling or thinking, how he will react, what he will accept or reject, etc. (Knapp, 1978). Statements such as "You can't fool me. I can read you like a book" or "What you need is a drink" are examples of such helping. On the other extreme, the hypercritical pattern is rarely masked by an exterior of helpfulness. It is more often raw negativity. This constant critical attitude toward another fosters the kind of problems that lead to de-escalation of an interpersonal relationship.

2. Active-Passive Patterns: The level of intensity between two people may also be carried to extremes. At one extreme is the person who always wants to be with you. Interpersonal hyperactivity is characterized by a person constantly seeking interactions from others. The problem here is that this attitude may be taken the wrong way, i.e., the partner sees you as not trusting him/her. If this perceived lack of trust develops, then the hyperactivity strategy has failed, because it has produced just the opposite response than was desired. At the other extreme is the passive person - withdrawn, uninvolved, etc. responding with silence, pseudo-agreement to reduce the time spent communicating with the other (i.e., "Right", "Sure", etc). A chronic pattern of passivity or withdrawl is one style which can be very troublesome for relationship maintenance.

3. Aggressive-Evasive Patterns: The difference between the aggressive and the evasive styles is the degree of directness involved. The aggressive style is characterised by a straightforward, head-on orientation with another. Hostility is the byword of this pattern (Knapp, 1978). Evasive strategies, on the other hand, are typified by tangents, misdirections, vagueness, etc.

(A) Rosenfield, Hayes, and Frents (1976) have discussed a process which they call "hassling". "Hassling" is identified as a five-step progressive and destructive sequence. This sequence will be used to provide a basis for elaborating upon the nature of the aggressive communication pattern.

(1) Repartee: The earliest signs of antagonism between combatants is in the form of witty remarks.

(2) Cliche: This stage seems to grow out of the first, but now the participants are no longer using original retorts. Rather, they seem to use canned or programmed comments.

(3) Namecalling: At this point the assailants are trying to ridicule or humiliate the other with stigmatizing labels. Partners seek out behaviors that they do not like in the other. Hence, behavior which may seem odd, strange, or atypical during the growth stages may now be labelled as crazy, neurotic, or insane (Knapp, 197).

(4) Provocation: This stage is the strongest test of the relationship. Both participants know that this is the last chance to designate a "winner" using only words as weapons (Knapp, 1978). This stage is characterized by insults, threats, etc.

(5) Psychological Degeneration: At this stage, the members are preparing for an actual physical and psychological fight.

These five characteristics would seem to describe some of the patterns that emerge in the use of the aggressive style. These problems cause the relationship to deteriorate and decay as communication becomes restricted to more negative aspects of the couple's relationship.

Evasiveness can be equally damaging to a relationship if used often enough. There are four general methods used for evading another person, as outlined by Knapp (1978) and presented below:

(1) Changing the Focus of Responsibility - This method

is used to distract or divert attention away from oneself. The purpose here is not only to change the focus of the conversation, but to also throw the responsibility onto the other person for the problems cited. Generally, evasive strategies have three purposes behind them: (A) Avoiding responsibility for one's behavior; (B) providing an excuse for one's behavior; and (C) making someone else look like the sole destructive element (Knapp, 1978). According to Knapp (1978), the basic paradigm seems to be something like this:

I could be _____	your best lover your best husband your best friend the best salesman etc.
if only _____	men my wife you my manager etc.
was (were) (would) _____	stop being so aggressive read some good books so we would have something to talk about not drink so much etc.

Source: Knapp, Mark. Social Intercourse: From Greeting to Goodbye. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978, p.207

(2) Changing the Direction of the Conversation - There are numerous ways which can be used to avoid threatening conversations by shifting the topics of focus. Washburne (1969) has idetified three of these methods: (a) "not answering at all"; (b) "managing the question"; and (3) "managing the questioner".

(3) Changing the Level of the Conversation - People often shift the level of conversation by going from an abstract to a concrete level, or vice versa.

(4) Sending Inconsistent Messages

4. Dominating-Submissive Patterns: When either dominance or submission becomes a habitual response, an inflexible communication pattern, it can easily tear

down a relationship. There are numerous ways in which the dominant style is expressed, but behind all of them is the assumption that the other person is somehow inadequate. In direct opposition, but with no less potential for relationship destruction, is the perpetually submissive response type. The exaggeration of dependency, the abdication of responsibility, and self-deprecating remarks characterize this communication style (Knapp, 1978).

5. Certain-Provisional Pattern: This area revolves around the issue of predictability. At one extreme is the person who is certain about the way that things are, i.e., he/she sees things in black-and-white terms; at the other extreme is the communicator who sees the world and people in it as ever-changing and impossible to capture and discuss. Both of these styles may lead to problems in coping with the conflicts that arise within the depenetration process.

VI. The Termination Process: A Summary

A. I have tried to outline how relationship termination may occur in intimate relationships. This discussion identified the general nature of communication during relationship decay as an increasing psychological and physical distance and continued disassociation from the marital partner. In short, communication behavior in decaying relationships will increasingly move toward and reflect those patterns normally associated with strangers rather than those associated with intimates.

B. Specifically, as a relationship moves toward termination, Knapp (1978, p.224), we would expect to find the following factors:

1. Increasing physical distance between the interactants
2. Increasing time between interactions
3. Shorter encounters
4. Less personal information exchanged
5. Less relationship talk
6. Fewer favors given and/or asked for
7. Less verbal immediacy
8. Superlative and absolutistic statements couched in negative rather than positive evaluations
9. Less nonverbal immediacy - less touching, colder vocal tone, less eye contact, etc.
10. An increasing concern for self rather than for the relationship or the other person

11. Less compromising due to an increasing win-lose orientation
12. More individual rather than mutual activities
13. Decreasing use of endearment terms and private language
14. Differences accentuated in clothes, food, other preferences, and many many more ....

C. In summary, there are certain problems which plague an intimate relationship and which can be identified. These problems, if not resolved through the sharing of communication, tend to accelerate and may cause the demise of an intimate interpersonal relationship. The marital context demands a great deal of energy and investment and committment, and while these are present at the times that the vows are taken, it becomes crucial to keep these flourishing in the relationship as it grows and develops. It is possible to catch one's self in the act of engaging in potentially destructive communication patterns and change them toward a more productive, healthy relationship. Thus while there are certain changes that occur in adult individuals as they attempt to grow together and separately, if the overriding concern and care that exists in the marital relationship can be seen by both partners, then it may be possible to continue to grow while keeping the relationship permanent and healthy.

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